

EAST STREET BRIDGE  
Spanning the Little Kanawha River at  
West Virginia Alternate Route 14  
Parkersburg  
Wood County  
West Virginia

HAER No. WV-44

HAER  
WVA  
57-PARK  
5-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD  
Northeast Field Area  
Chesapeake/Allegheny System Support Office  
National Park Service  
U.S. Custom House  
200 Chestnut Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19106

HAER  
WVA  
59-PARK,  
5-

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

East Street Bridge

HAER NO. WV-44

LOCATION: West Virginia Alternate Route 14, spanning the  
Little Kanawha River  
Parkersburg  
Wood County, West Virginia

UTM: 17.452843.4345386  
Quad: Parkersburg, WV-Ohio, 1:24,000

DATE OF  
CONSTRUCTION: 1907

ENGINEER: Ralph Modjeski

ARCHITECT: Unknown

PRESENT OWNER: West Virginia Division of Highways  
Charleston, West Virginia 25305

PRESENT USE: Vehicular bridge

SIGNIFICANCE: This bridge, spanning the Little Kanawha River at Parkersburg, was constructed in 1907. Originally built to carry street cars across the river, it was adapted to automobile traffic as times changed. Consisting of five steel girder spans and three simple span through trusses, it is an excellent example of a early 20th Century steel bridge.

PROJECT  
INFORMATION: The project is part of the statewide bridge replacement and upgrading program. Due to the poor condition of the superstructure, heavy traffic, and potential closure of the structure to all traffic with future deterioration, the existing bridge warrants replacement.

Michael K. Wilson, Historian  
West Virginia Division of Highways  
Charleston, West Virginia 25305  
June 3, 1992

Built in 1907, the East Street Bridge is an excellent example of an early twentieth century steel bridge. The bridge crosses the Little Kanawha River which had for many years been the lifeline for north central West Virginia.

The structure is made up of eight spans. These include five continuous steel girder spans and three simple span steel through trusses. Steel girder spans one and two, each have a length of fifty-two feet, six and one-quarter inches. Steel girder spans six, seven, and eight each have a length of fifty-three feet, five and three quarter inches. The through trusses are much longer. Through spans three and five each have lengths of one hundred seventeen feet, three inches. Span four has a length of two hundred ninety-eight feet. The total length of the East Street Bridge is eight hundred thirteen feet, seven inches. The waterway opening for traffic on the Little Kanawha River is two-hundred ninety four feet, nine inches wide and forty-three feet, six inches high (beneath span four). The total width of the bridge includes a twenty feet wide roadway and a six feet, eleven inch upstream sidewalk.

The smaller through trusses , spans three and five, are of the pratt variety. The large through truss, span four is a Pennsylvania Petit type. All spans except span four are connected by riveted steel. Span four is pin connected.

As the automobile age began to transform our nation, the need for an improved infra-structure became apparent. But as the story goes, it was not concern for the country's development that led to the construction of the bridge, but an enterprising gentleman's lust for a dollar. As the story would have it, a certain Parkersburg man owned an amusement park on the South side of the Little Kanawha River. He wanted a bridge to carry the street cars across the river to the Park. Whether this story is true or not is anyone's guess, but the fact is that the bridge on East Street across the Little Kanawha River was built in 1907. The cost of the construction is not known, but we do know that the bridge designer was Ralph Modjeski, a civil engineer from Chicago. Mr. Modjeski designed the bridge for the Parkersburg and South Side Bridge Company. The bridge consisted of five steel girded spans and three simple span thru trusses. The structure also had a wood deck. The main use of the bridge was not automobile traffic but streetcar traffic. The automobile was still in its infancy in 1907 and in town, the streetcar was the major mode of transportation. In older photos of the bridge approaches, streetcar tracks can be seen. Of course, as times changed the streetcars began to fade away and vehicular traffic became more prominent.

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In 1927 the bridge was repainted and new flooring was installed. The bridge was also re-floored in August and September of 1935. Mr. Wolfe, bridge foreman and carpenter, was in charge and had between six and eight carpenters working under him. The job took three to four weeks and cost between three thousand and four thousand dollars.

On October of 1935 the West Virginia Division of Highways, then the State Road Commission of West Virginia, purchased the East Street Bridge from the Marietta and Parkersburg Bridge Company who had bought it from the Parkersburg and South Side Bridge Company in 1919. The buying price was \$154,500.00. As part of the deal, the Monongahela West Penn Public Service Company agreed to pay the State Road Commission \$1,800.00 per year for use of its street and freight car rails.

In the early 1940's the bridge was once again rehabilitated. The major change was replacement of the wood deck surface with a steel grid floor.

The last major rehabilitation of the East Street Bridge occurred in 1951. It was once again repainted, some new steel replaced damaged pieces, and a sidewalk was added. Some repair work had to be done in April, 1989, when five barges broke loose from their moorings and struck the bridge. Damage was minor, however.

In recent years, the bridge has fallen into constant disrepair. Rust has put a large portion of the steel in danger. Because of this, the East Street Bridge is slated for replacement through the West Virginia statewide bridge replacement and upgrading program.

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